



EnJourMe (English Journal of Merdeka):

Culture, Language, and Teaching of English

Journal homepage: <http://jurnal.unmer.ac.id/index.php/enjourme/index>

Demotivation factors' differences of high school EFL learners during Covid-19 pandemic: A quantitative study

Reza Anggriyashati Adara, Novita Puspahaty, Nuryadi, Wilda Utama

English Language and Literature Department, University Islam 45 Bekasi, Jl. Cut Mutia No.83, 17113, Bekasi, Indonesia

Corresponding author: reza.adara@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 07 October 2021

Accepted 06 December 2021

Available online 28 December 2021

Keywords: Demotivation, EFL learning, quantitative study.

DOI: 10.26905/enjourme.v6i2.6519

How to cite this article (APA Style):

Adara, R.A., Puspahaty, N., Nuryadi, N., & Utama, W. (2021). Demotivation factors' differences of high school EFL learners during Covid-19 pandemic: A quantitative study. *EnJourMe (English Journal of Merdeka) : Culture, Language, and Teaching of English*, 6(2) 176-186. doi: <https://doi.org/10.26905/enjourme.v6i2.6519>

ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic may pose a factor that reduces learners' motivation. The present study aims to investigate the differences between demotivation factors of public and private high school EFL learners during the Covid-19 pandemic. The present study applies a quantitative method to obtain its data by distributing a set of questionnaires adapted from Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) to 61 high school students from public and private high schools. The findings indicate that both groups of learners are mostly demotivated by inadequate school facilities, test scores, and teachers' competence and teaching styles. It can be said that despite the differences in teaching location, learners may be demotivated by the same variables. Therefore, it seems imperative for teachers and teaching institutions to provide better school facilities, reduce learners' anxiety during tests, and improve teachers' competence and teaching styles to overcome students' demotivation.

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1. Introduction

Covid-19 pandemic may lead to students' demotivation. It has been argued that Covid-19 pandemic has affected a lot of sectors in daily life. One of the most affected sectors is EFL learning and teaching. As students and teachers are forced to resort to online learning to stop the spread of virus, it posed another problem toward EFL learning and teaching. Hartshorn and McMurry (2020) noted that Covid-19 pandemic shifted the priority of both teachers and students from education to surviving from the pandemic. Such shift may be the culprit of demotivation.

Although it is not researched as widely as motivation, demotivation has gained more interests among researchers and educators in recent years (Adara et al., 2019; Adara & Najmudin, 2020; Han

et al., 2019; Haryanto et al., 2018). Several studies show that EFL learners may lose their interests and motivation during language learning process (Rajabi & Pozveh, 2016; Tanaka, 2017; Xaypanya et al., 2017). This gradual loss of motivation is what Dörnyei (2001) called as demotivation. Researchers shift their attention to demotivation because investigating demotivation may provide more understanding toward the solutions to overcome it (Adara & Najmudin, 2020). As EFL learners face various types of challenges which can impact their learning process and outcomes (Jahedizadeh et al., 2016), it seems important to analyze the sources of demotivation before it can affect learning process and outcomes severely. The above factors show some reasons why demotivation is researched.

Demotivation is important to be investigated because of several factors. Unlike motivation, studies which specifically investigate demotivation can be considered as scarce (Lucas et al., 2016) as well as under-researched (Chen, 2013). However, it does not mean that demotivation is not as widely investigated as motivation. Numerous researchers have analyzed demotivation (Kikuchi, 2011; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Santosa & Riady, 2021). The urgency to investigate demotivation may root from the notion that investigating demotivation may help teachers overcoming demotivation among students from various educational contexts (Ghadirzadeh et al., 2013) and assist learners to learn the target language effectively (Kikuchi, 2011). In addition, comprehending demotivation may assist researchers to understand various theories of motivation (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). The above points demonstrate the importance of analyzing demotivation in every EFL learning and teaching context.

In regard to the above paragraph, demotivation is a specific concept which differs from another concept called amotivation. Regarded as the dark side of motivation (Rastegar et al., 2012), demotivation can be defined as the gradual diminution of learners' positive attitudes and actions toward language learners. On the other hand, amotivation is regarded as the loss of motivation because learner feel incompetence and helpless toward language learning activities. In addition, while unrealistic expectations of results caused amotivation, demotivation is caused by external factors such as teachers or learning environment (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013). It can be said that demotivation is a unique concept which is unlike amotivation.

Numerous factors have been shown as the causes of demotivation. Investigating those factors may provide an assistance to teachers and teaching institutions on how to overcome demotivation. A study of Kikuchi and Sakai (2009) lists course books, inadequate school facilities, test scores, non-communicative methods, teachers' competence and teaching styles as the causes of demotivation. He stated that it is important for teachers to adapt their teaching styles so that students could improve their communication skills. Similarly, the findings of Astuti's (2017) study show teachers' classroom behavior as the most salient demotivation factors. Although Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) noted similar demotivation factors like Kikuchi's, the results of their study demonstrated learning contents and materials as well as test scores as the most salient demotivation factors. Their study also notes inadequate school facilities as the least salient demotivation factor. Despite finding teachers' incompetence and lack of intrinsic motivation as the most salient demotivation factors, a study of Adara et al. (2019) found that inadequate school facilities as one of the most demotivating. Their study shares a similarity with Meshkat and Hassani (2012). On the other hand, the findings of Sahragard and Ansari-pour (2014) study shows economic problems and future pessimism as the most salient demotivation factors. It can be said that each group of learners may have different factors which

demotivate them the most. Thus, it seems important to investigate diverse types of learners in different contexts and levels of education (Molavi & Biria, 2013) so that researchers and educators can be equipped with insights on dealing with it.

As mentioned in the above paragraph, investigating demotivation matters as the results can be different depending on the location or teaching contexts. As motivation which needs to be investigated in various settings and contexts, investigating demotivation will provide a more detailed information toward different factors which lead to demotivation toward certain types of learners (Molavi & Biria, 2013). Besides that, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) state that learners from different types of motivational states or proficiencies need to be involved to gain better understanding of problems in second language learners. In this regard, numerous studies have analyzed demotivation factors of Indonesian EFL learners. In 2018, Adara investigates demotivation factors of a group of Indonesian EFL learners while in 2019, a study of Adara et al. (2019) investigated the differences in demotivation factors of two groups of EFL learners. In addition, Adara and Najmuddin (2020) compared the differences between demotivation factors experienced by a group of students before and during Covid-19 pandemic. The above points show the diversity of results in studies toward demotivation.

Numerous studies show that demotivation can be caused by learners and teachers related factors. A study of Javed (2021) investigated demotivating factors of a group of ESL learners to learn vocabulary. Javed (2021) used a qualitative approach to gain his data through written feedback. He distributed his questionnaires to 300 ESL students in Pakistan. The findings of his study demonstrated learners' related factors such as lack of interests, lack of opportunities to use English, confusion toward the material selection, mistakes in time management, over-use of smartphones, and lack of exposure toward target language as the most salient demotivation factors. On the other hand, a study of Akram et al. (2021) shows teachers' related factors such as teachers' use of demotivational language on students' learning process can worsen their demotivation. The above studies show that both teachers and learners' related factors can lead to demotivation.

Besides teachers, demotivation can also be caused by other external demotivation factors. A study of Evans and Tragant (2020) on the correlation between demotivation and drop out levels among adult EFL learners in Spain shows that the majority of participants point poor teaching practice, a lack of speaking practice and the differences between their desired level of English skills and their perceived 'stagnant' level as demotivation factors. Furthermore, a study of Adara and Najmuddin (2020) demonstrates online learning during Covid-19 as one of demotivation factors. It can be said that besides teachers, there are other external factors which can lead to learners' demotivation.

Despite the gradual interests toward demotivation, there is still a lack of research toward it, especially ones that specifically investigate EFL learners' demotivation in Indonesian context. For instance, there is still a lack of studies which specifically compares the differences in demotivation factors between EFL learners in public and private schools. The present study aims to investigate the differences in demotivation factors between two groups of EFL learners in public and private high schools in Indonesia. A study of Adara et al. (2019) shows that both groups are mostly demotivated by teachers' competence and teaching style, lack of intrinsic motivation and inadequate school facilities. Based on the previous study, following are two hypotheses of the present study:

1. In terms of saliency of demotivation factors, each group will have different factors which demotivate them the most.
2. In terms of saliency of demotivation factors, each group will have similar factors factors which demotivate them the most.

2. Methodology

The present section aims to discuss participants, pilot study, procedures and data analysis of present study.

2.1 Participants

The sampling of present study is a convenience sampling. The participants were asked to fill the questionnaires through Google Forms. The participants consist of 41 students of public high schools and 20 students of private high schools in Jakarta, Indonesia.

2.2 Research instruments

The present study applied a 14-item questionnaire adapted from Sakai and Kikuchi (2009). The present study conducted a pilot study before distributing the questionnaire. Four participants were asked to join the pilot study. The results of pilot study show Cronbach Alpha coefficient more than 0,65 which means that each item in the questionnaire is valid.

2.3 Data collection and analysis

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, the questionnaires were distributed online through Google Forms. Data collection was conducted for a month. Collected data was analyzed using SPSS 23.

3. Results and discussions

The present section aims to discuss the results of the present study. To provide a better organization for the discussions, the results will be shown first before being analyzed in the latter subsection.

3.1 Results

Following is a table which shows the differences in demotivation factors between public and private high school EFL learners.

Table 1. The differences in demotivation factors between public and private high school students

Public High School Students	Mean	Std.Deviation	Private High School Students	Mean	Std.Deviation
Inadequate School Facilities	2.71	0.814	Inadequate School Facilities	2.75	0.786
Test Scores	2.51	1.344	Test Scores	2.55	1.356
Teachers' Competence and Teaching Styles	2.41	0.894	Teachers' Competence and Teaching Styles	2.45	0.887
Lack of Intrinsic Motivation	2.27	0.923	Lack of Intrinsic Motivation	2.3	0.923
Learning Content and Materials	2.12	0.6	Learning Content and Materials	2.05	0.887

Table 1 illustrates that both public and private high school EFL learners share similarities in terms of saliency of demotivation factors. While ‘inadequate school facilities’ is the most salient de-motivation factor for both public (M=2.71) and private (M=2.75) high school students, the least salient demotivation factors for both groups of participants are learning content and materials (M=2,12 for public high school students and M=2.05 for private high school students) and lack of intrinsic motivation (M=2,27 for public high school students and M=2.3 for private high school students). In addition, test scores are shown to be the second most salient demotivation factors for both groups (M=2,51 for public high school students and M=2.55 for private high school students). Lastly, teachers’ competence and teaching styles is shown to be the third most demotivation factors among both groups (M=2,41 for public high school students and M=2.45 for private high school students). In regard to the hypothesis, the findings of the present study suggest that both groups share similarities in terms of saliency of demotivation factors.

3.2 Discussions

The discussions will be organized based on the saliency of demotivation factors shown the previous paragraphs.

Inadequate school facilities

The result of present study shows ‘inadequate school facilities’ as the most salient demotivation factor for both public and private EFL high school learners. Fareo and Ojo (2013) argue that facilities can greatly impact students’ academic performances and the lack of school facilities can lead to students’ poor performance. Furthermore, physical facilities can affect students’ level of motivation and academic performance (Akomolafe & Adesua, 2016). Although several studies on demotivation do not suggest inadequate school facilities as the most salient demotivation factors (Ghadirzadeh et al., 2013; Han et al., 2019; Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009), numerous research show that inadequate school facilities can be the most demotivating factors (Adara et al., 2019; Krishnan & Pathan, 2013; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012; Rajabi & Pozveh, 2016). This difference may be attributed to the availability of

school facilities in the respective schools or teaching institutions. The latter point will be discussed in the next paragraph.

The availability of adequate school facilities may differ from one institution to another. A study of Adara et al. (2019) on the differences in demotivating factors between two groups of EFL learners in university shows that the participants were less demotivated with teaching and learning facilities in university than they were in high school because they were provided with better facilities in the university. Besides that, the participants of Adara et al. (2019) admitted that although their high schools were equipped with facilities such as computers or internet, they were not given chances to use school facilities during teaching and learning process of English. The lack of use of internet, computer equipment, audio and video materials in language learning process in school which allow learners to learn the target language effectively may lead to demotivation (Krishnan & Pathan, 2013). Al-Khairi (2013) suggests the maximum use of modern teaching facilities to improve learners' involvement. Related to the previous point, it seems important for teachers to integrate the use of school facilities such as computers or else to improve students' motivation.

Nevertheless, the provision of better school facilities does not entirely solve students' demotivation. Adara and Najmuddin's (2020) study on the differences in demotivation factors of a group of EFL learners before and during Covid-19 pandemic demonstrates online learning as one of demotivation factors during Covid-19 pandemic. It can be said that the integration of technology needs to be prepared by teachers. Although learners already know the benefits of technology toward language learning process, they still need to be guided by teachers during the process (Adara, 2020). Besides providing better school facilities, both teachers and students have to be ready before the integration of technology into the language classrooms to gain maximum impacts of technology toward language learning and teaching process.

Test scores

The findings of present study demonstrate 'test scores' as the second most salient demotivation factor. Some studies do not suggest test scores as the most demotivating factors (Adara, 2018; Ahmad, 2021; Soureshjani & Riahipour, 2012). However, numerous studies have shown 'test scores' as one of the most demotivating factors (Adara & Najmudin, 2020; Çankaya, 2018; Jomairi, 2011; Kim & Seo, 2012). It has been argued that poor test results can only cause demotivation among less motivated learners (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). However, both more and less motivated might be prone to demotivation due to poor test results (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013). It can be said that poor test results can lead to demotivation toward more and less motivated learners.

Demotivation due to test scores can be overcome with encouragement from teachers. There are several factors which become the reason of why test scores lead to demotivation. Firstly, low test scores may cause inferiority complexes (Krishnan & Pathan, 2013). Secondly, learners may think they failed at learning English when they see low test scores (Kim & Kim, 2016). Thirdly, a study of Rastegar et al. (2012) noted a link between demotivation and learners' anxiety. As students worry about their test scores, it might make them become more anxious with their learning process. Such thing may hinder their language learning success. Thus, it seems important for teachers to encourage

confidence (Alavinia & Sehat, 2012) among students and ensure that their success in language learning cannot only be measured by test scores (Adara & Najmuddin, 2020). Besides that, teachers should provide an effective study method that can help students overcoming stress due to exams (Song & Kim, 2017). The above points show how demotivation due to test scores can be solved.

Teachers' competence and teaching styles

To certain degree, teachers' related factors such as teachers' competence and teaching styles can affect learners' demotivation. Several studies show that the variables related to 'teachers' competence and teaching styles' often come as the most salient demotivation factor (Adara, 2018; Adara et al., 2019; Chong et al., 2019; Khouya, 2018). However, the results of present study share similarities with numerous studies on demotivation (Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009; Zou & Xu, 2016). Nevertheless, the above studies still emphasize on the effect of teachers toward learners' motivation as well as demotivation. The idea is also shared by Tanaka (2005). It can be said that teachers have an important role in influencing learners' demotivation.

Heavy focus on grammar instead of communicative skills and teachers' behavior may lead to students' demotivation. The findings of Adara et al. (2019) showed that the participants were more satisfied with their English instructors in the university than their teachers in high schools because the latter focused more on grammar teaching than improving English skills. Similarly, a study of Kim et al. (2018) demonstrated grammar focused lessons as well as the emphasis on rote learning as the causes of demotivation. If students expect to be taught grammar, it will be unlikely for them to experience demotivation. However, heavily focused grammar lessons may lead to demotivation if students expect lessons which focus on improving their communicative skills. Thus, it seems important for teachers to communicate the lessons' objectives prior teaching so that students can know what they will get during learning and teaching process. In addition, teachers' behavior can affect students' demotivation. The findings of Han et al. (2019) show that teachers' negative reaction toward students' mistakes may make them less eager to speak and demotivated. In addition, remark that teachers' attitudes such biased behavior, indifference, and unintelligible teaching methods can lead to students' demotivation (Hassaskhah et al., 2015). Therefore, it seems important for teachers to commit toward their teaching so that it can imbue same feelings in students (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013) as teachers' motivation can improve learners' efforts (Çankaya, 2018). Besides that, teachers should be provided with in-service trainings to develop their competence (Quadir, 2017). The above points show some teachers' related factors which may cause students' demotivation as well as how to overcome it.

Lack of intrinsic motivation

Although it seems to be a less significant demotivating factor, lack of intrinsic motivation needs to be overcome. Lack of intrinsic motivation has been consistently shown as the least demotivating factors in some studies (Adara & Najmuddin, 2020; Çankaya, 2018; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012; Rajabi & Pozveh, 2016). Intrinsic motivation can be defined as one of types of motivation which comes from internal factors (Beath, 2010). Although it has been shown as one of least demotivating

factors, it does not mean that teachers can undermine lack of intrinsic motivation among students as it can fluctuate (Carreira, 2006). Several studies show that lack of intrinsic motivation can be the cause of demotivation (Jomairi, 2011). Thus, it seems important to improve intrinsic motivation to avoid demotivation. Several measures can be taken to improve students' intrinsic motivation. Firstly, students' intrinsic motivation can be developed by ensuring teachers' competence and providing supportive learning environment (Adara et al., 2019). Secondly, generating students' interests through authentic teaching materials and promoting contacts with native speakers of target language can improve learners' intrinsic motivation (Wei, 2014). In addition, teachers should encourage students to have personal goals which can only be achieved through language mastery such as having better salary or passing exams (Zhou, 2018). It can be said that intrinsic motivation needs to be developed through several measures.

Learning content and materials

The results of present study suggest learning content and materials as the least demotivation factor. In contrast to the findings of present study, numerous studies show learning content and materials as the most demotivating factors (Çankaya, 2018; Ghadirzadeh et al., 2012; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012). It can be said that each group of learners may differ in terms of factors which demotivate them the most. However, it does not mean that learning content and materials are less important. Tabatabaei and Molavi (2012) show difficulties in comprehending materials can be the most salient demotivation factor. Similar results were shown by Kim (2012). Meshkat and Hassani (2012) demonstrate that long reading passages, lessons that focused on grammar as well as the textbook and the exercise book can lead to demotivation. Similarly, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) find the overemphasis on grammar and long passages as the sources of demotivation. Therefore, providing learning content and materials that suit learners' needs seems imperative to avoid demotivation.

4. Conclusion

The present study aimed to analyze the differences in demotivation factors between public and private high schools. The results show both groups share similarities in terms of saliency of demotivation factors among the participants. The results suggest that despite the differences in teaching contexts, both groups of learners can be demotivated with the same factors. Therefore, teachers and teaching institutions should conduct several measures such as providing better school facilities, minimize students' anxiety over test scores as well as ensuring teachers' qualities to overcome students' demotivation. Despite efforts to reduce it, the present study is not without limitation. First, it would benefit from many participants as it will reflect the population better. Second, it would benefit more from a longer period of data collection as it would give more time for participants to think over. However, it does not mean that the present study is not without merits. It can be a milestone for similar studies. Further studies can investigate the differences in demotivation factors among pre-service teachers or students who used different learning technology as their learning medium. For instance, future researchers can investigate the differences in demotivation factors among students who used Google Classroom or other learning management system.

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